



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shana Jones, Special Assistant
Daryl Fields, Public Information Officer
(210) 384-7440

December 14, 2005

DEL RIO JURY FINDS SAN ANTONIO COUPLE GUILTY OF NARCOTICS CHARGES

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced that a federal jury in Del Rio, Texas, found 28-year-old Ismael Orlando Lira and 23-year-old Tina Lira of San Antonio, Texas, guilty earlier today on charges of conspiracy to smuggle marijuana.

This afternoon, the jury found that Ismael Orlando Lira engaged in a continuing criminal enterprise and conspired with others to possess with intent to distribute more than 1,000 kilograms of marijuana. The trial evidence showed that Mr. Lira hired others to smuggle loads of marijuana from Del Rio to San Antonio. The loads of marijuana ranged from 230 to 1,050 pounds each. One witness testified that Mr. Lira delivered between 15,000 and 25,000 pounds of marijuana to him over an 18 month period beginning in early 2001. Jurors also convicted Mr. Lira of three counts of possessing more than 100 kilograms of marijuana with intent to distribute, one count of distributing marijuana to a minor, and two counts of money laundering.

Tina Lira was found guilty of conspiring with others to possess with intent to distribute import more than 1,000 kilograms of marijuana, and three counts of possessing more than 100 kilograms of marijuana with intent to distribute. The jury found Ms. Lira not guilty of one count of money laundering.

As a result of the jury verdict, Ismael Lira faces between 20 years and life in federal prison; Tina Lira, between ten years and life in federal prison. Visiting United States District Judge Robert Dawson from the Western District of Arkansas has scheduled sentencing in this case for June 6, 2006.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Assistant United States Attorneys John A. Peralta and Jeremy Sibert prosecuted the case on behalf of the government.

#####